

# **MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE**



**ANNUAL PURSUIT REPORT  
2021**

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

As you will see in this report, there were 37 pursuits in 2021, nine fewer than in 2020. That's lower than the 10-year average for our Department.

Of that total, 21 involved officers in pursuit of someone suspected of a serious crime, and 14 involved drivers suspected of driving while intoxicated.

For historical comparison, since 2016, 49% of pursuits by officers were for individuals suspected of driving under the influence; 46% were for subjects eluding police who were involved in felony offenses such as stolen vehicles; and the remaining percentage were for other offenses or violations, such as weapons offenses and narcotics-related offenses.

Most pursuits lasted less than five minutes and covered five miles or less. As you can see, this is much different from police chases you see on TV or in the movies, which can go on for quite a few minutes over long distances, ending in some sort of dramatic conclusion.

Under MCPD policy, a criminal pursuit is justified if an officer believes a felony offense has been committed or is being committed. A traffic-related pursuit is justified if the officer believes a person is driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics, or if there is a hit-and-run personal injury collision when the officer has reasonable cause to believe a serious physical injury has occurred.

The MCPD conducts an in-depth review of every vehicular pursuit to make certain those guidelines are followed, and if not, appropriate follow-up actions are promptly taken.

In addition, a supervisor will monitor and decide on whether to allow the pursuit to continue. Safety is the primary concern, whether the safety of the public, the safety of the officer, or the safety of the person(s) who are fleeing.

Again, as you will note in this report, most of our pursuits end without incident. But when a police pursuit ends with a crash or someone getting injured or killed, the public will ask questions and demand accountability. Rest assured; those are the same questions and the same level of accountability that the MCPD brings to each police pursuit we engage in.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. G. Jones'.

Marcus G. Jones  
Chief of Police

## OVERVIEW

The information contained in this report is obtained from the MCP 610, *Motor Vehicle Pursuit Report*, the form completed by a supervisor from the district where a police pursuit originated. All reports are reviewed to verify compliance with department policy by the supervisor, a District executive, and the Assistant Chief of the respective bureau.

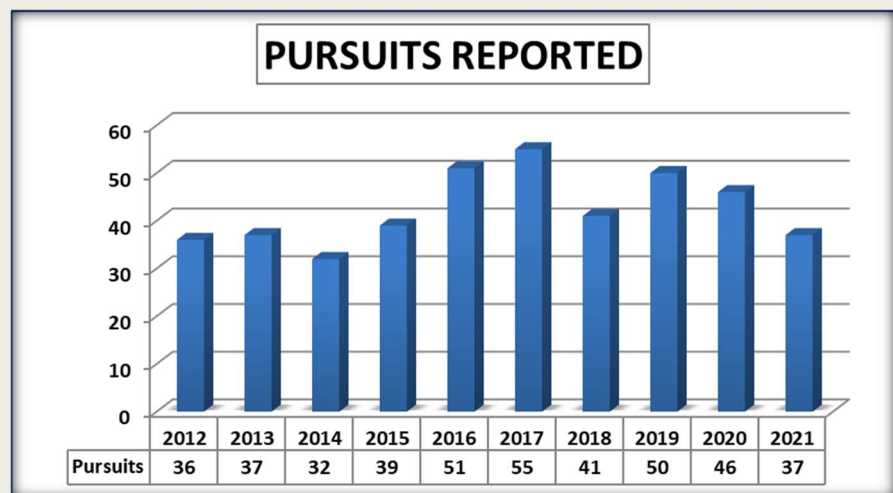
A vehicular pursuit is defined by policy as *an active attempt by an officer in a vehicle to apprehend an occupant of a moving motor vehicle who exhibits a clear intention to avoid apprehension by maintaining elevated speed, increasing speed, and/or using evasive tactics.*

On an annual basis, the Montgomery County Department of Police reviews and analyzes the data collected from the MCP 610 forms obtained in that calendar year and the pursuit policy (Function Code 135).

Per Function Code 135, *Vehicle Pursuits*, pursuit of a vehicle is authorized only when the offense for which the suspect is being pursued is one of the following:

1. **Criminal:** Felony or the officer has reason to believe a felony has occurred or is occurring. Note: For 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Assault on a Police Officer to be a felony, physical injury means “*any impairment of physical condition, excluding minor injuries*”, and “*a person may not intentionally cause physical injury to another if the person knows or has reason to know that the other is a law enforcement officer engaged in the performance of the officer’s official duties.*”
2. **Traffic:**
  - a. Driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics (*misdemeanor*).
  - b. Hit-and-run, personal injury collision when the officer has reasonable cause to believe serious physical injury has occurred (*felony*).

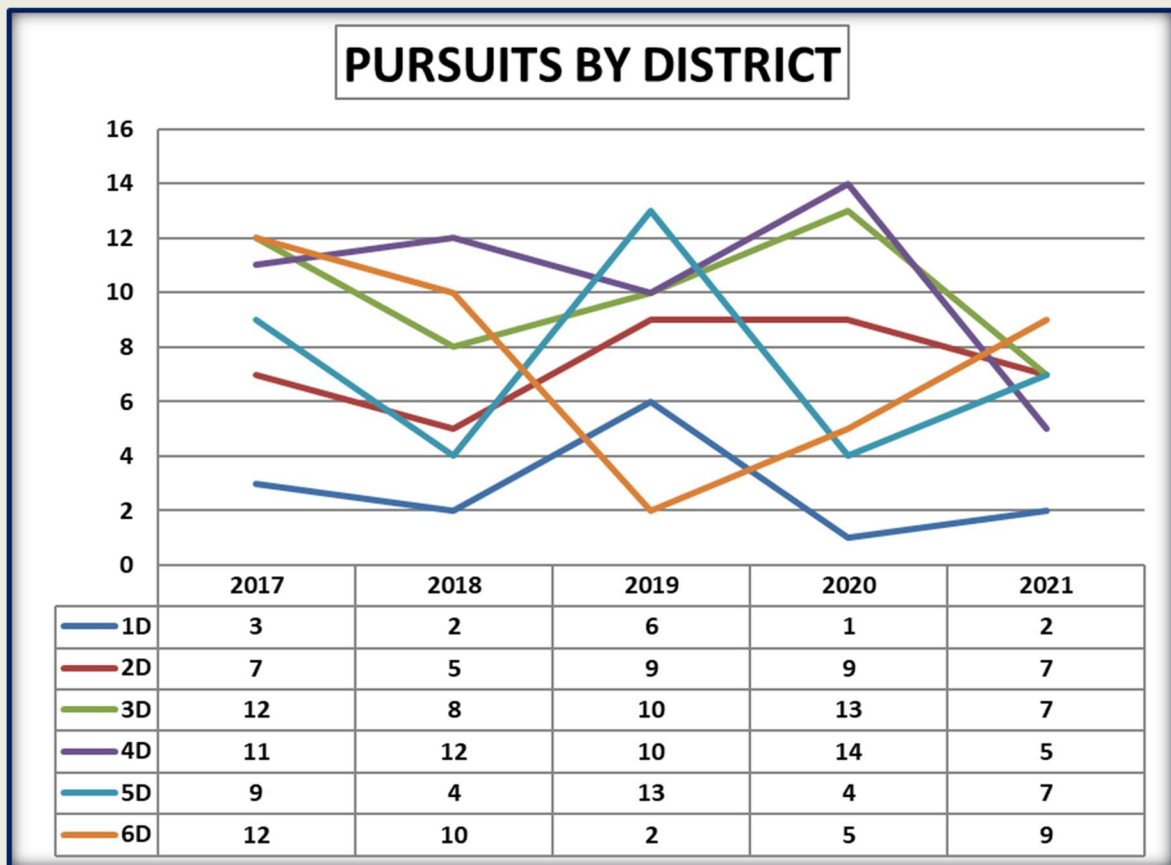
In 2021, there were 37 pursuits, nine fewer pursuits than reported in 2020, or a decrease of 20%. Moreover, the number of pursuits is lower than the department’s 10-year pursuit average of 42 pursuits per year. In 2021, there was one pursuit that was deemed to be non-compliant with FC 135.



## 2021 PURSUIT ANALYSIS

### By District

The graph below illustrates the frequency by district in which Montgomery County police officers initiated a pursuit in 2021 and highlights trends over the last five years. In 2021, the number of pursuits increased in three districts, 1D (*Rockville*), 5D (*Germantown*), and 6D (*Montgomery Village*), while decreases were noted in the remaining districts. The largest decreases in pursuits (64% and 46% respectively) occurred in 4D (*Wheaton*) and 3D (*Silver Spring*). All districts except 6D (*Montgomery Village*) recorded totals lower than their five-year averages in 2021. Three pursuits initiated in 2021 crossed into another district. Since 2017, the total number of pursuits has decreased 32%.

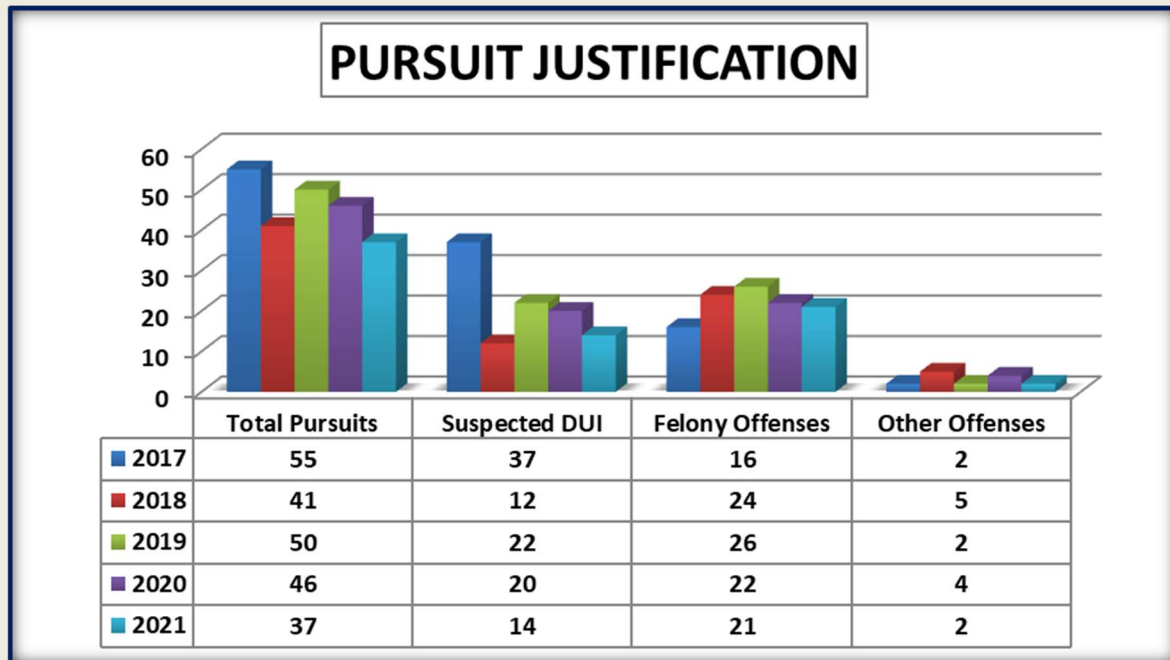


The following table shows the five-year pursuit averages (2017 – 2021) for all districts.

DISTRICT	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PURSUIT
1	3
2	7
3	10
4	10
5	7
6	7

## By Justification

In 2021, apprehension of suspects engaged in a variety of *felony offenses* and suspected of *driving under the influence* (DUI) were the primary reasons that officers initiated pursuits (57% and 38%, respectively). The remaining two pursuits (5%) were initiated for purposes including assisting another agency in pursuit and pursuing a wanted subject.



Since 2017, 46% of pursuits by officers were for individuals suspected of *driving under the influence*; 48% were for subjects eluding police who were involved in *felony offenses* such as stolen vehicles; and the remaining percentage were for other offenses or violations, such as *weapons offenses* and *narcotics-related offenses*.

## By Location

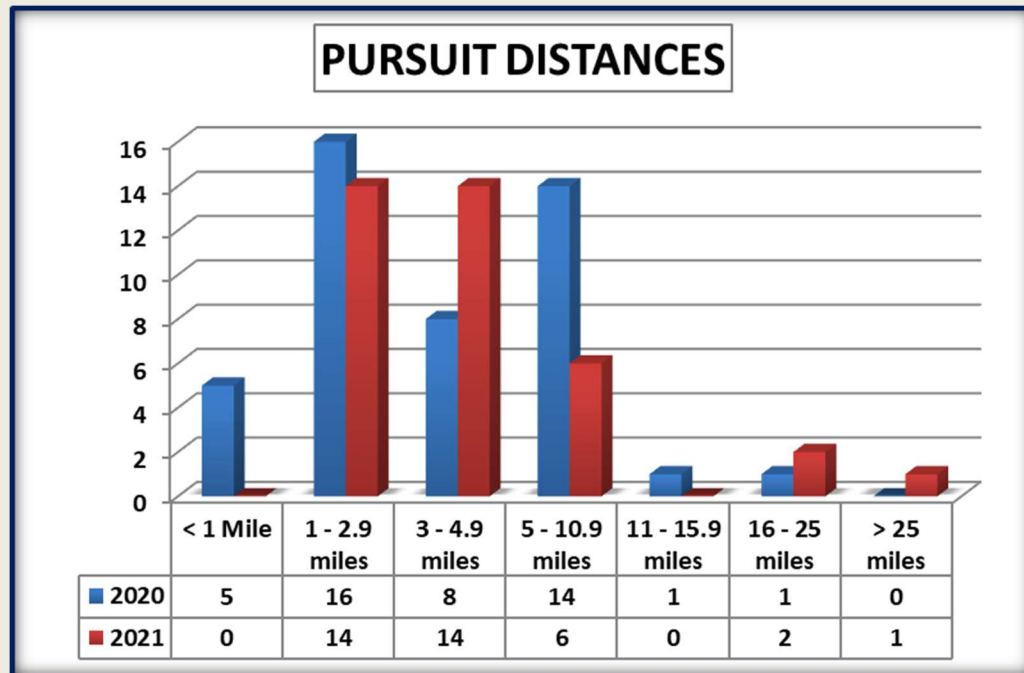
Function Code 135 states that “Officers may pursue into a neighboring jurisdiction only when an officer has probable cause to believe the crime committed was a felony of a violent type.”

In 2020, there were zero incidents in which Montgomery County police officers pursued suspects outside the county’s jurisdictional boundaries. In 2021, there were three (8%) incidents which crossed the county boundary, eight pursuits were terminated at or prior to the county line in compliance with FC 135.

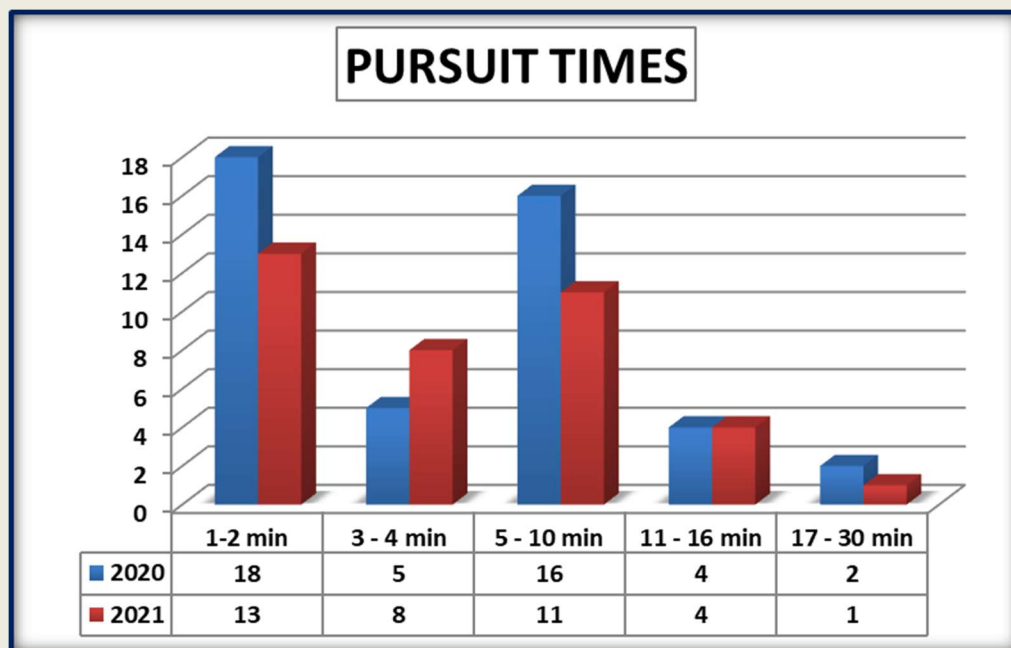
## By Distance & Duration

The frequency of pursuit *distances* and *times* in 2021 were consistent with those in 2020, in which approximately 57% of the pursuits in Montgomery County lasted less than five minutes, compared to 52% in 2020. There was an increase (60%) in pursuits lasting three to four minutes in 2021, however, a 31% decrease was noted in pursuits lasting between five and ten minutes. There were only five pursuits that lasted longer than 10 minutes in 2021, one fewer than the number of pursuits reported in 2020. The longest pursuit in 2021 was 24 minutes long and the farthest distance traveled during pursuit was 28 miles.

The *distances* and *times* for all pursuits reported in 2021 are reflected in the following charts.



The data shows that on average from 2020 - 2021, most vehicle pursuits ranged from *one* to *three* miles.



The data shows that on average for the two-year period, most pursuits (38%) ended within *one* to *two* minutes or within *five* to *ten* minutes (33%).



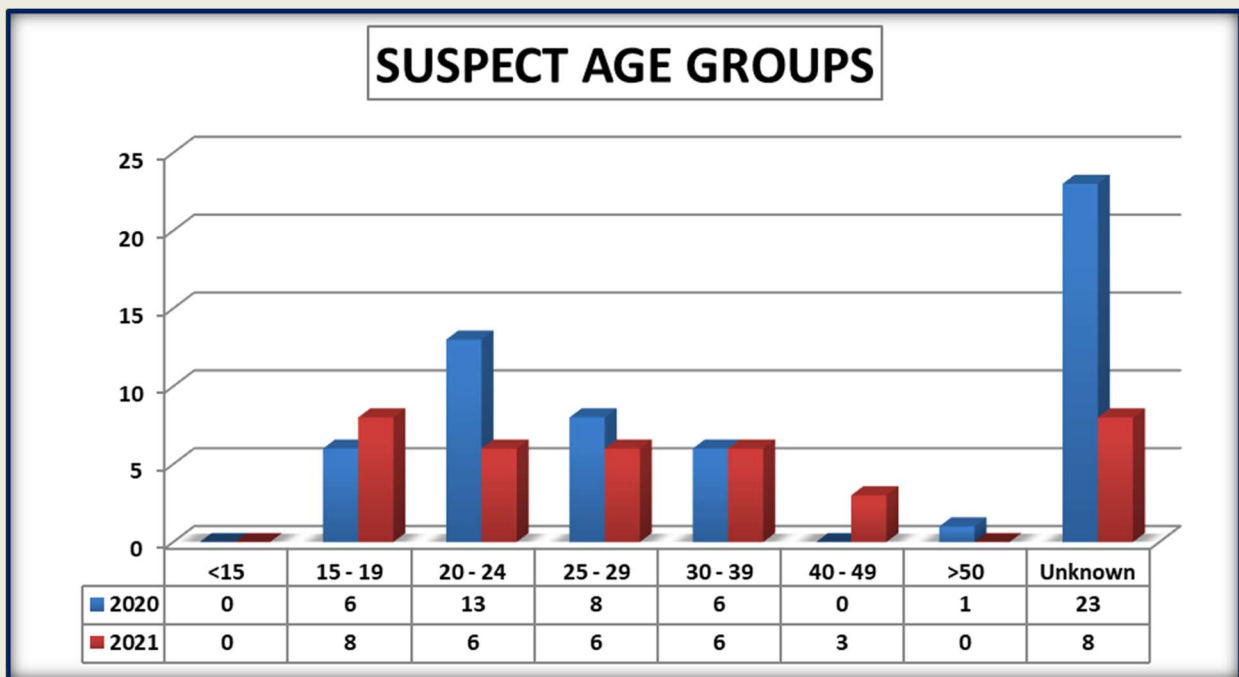
## SUSPECT ANALYSIS

Apprehension is not the primary aspect of a police vehicle pursuit; *the safety of the officer and the public are the most important aspects since the risks are high for all*. Officers and supervisors must balance the inherent safety risks with the urgency to apprehend the driver.

In 2021, suspects were able to successfully evade police officers in 17 of the 37 pursuits (46% of the time) compared to 52% of the time in 2020 by driving at extremely high rates of speed, fleeing on foot once the vehicle stopped or was involved in a collision, or the pursuits were terminated by supervisors for various reasons, generally due to crossing jurisdictional boundaries, traffic conditions, or public safety concerns.

The demographic data in the chart below reflects information for the suspects that were apprehended during the pursuits, as well as the random data that was known about the suspects who were able to elude apprehension.

*Suspect Age Groups*

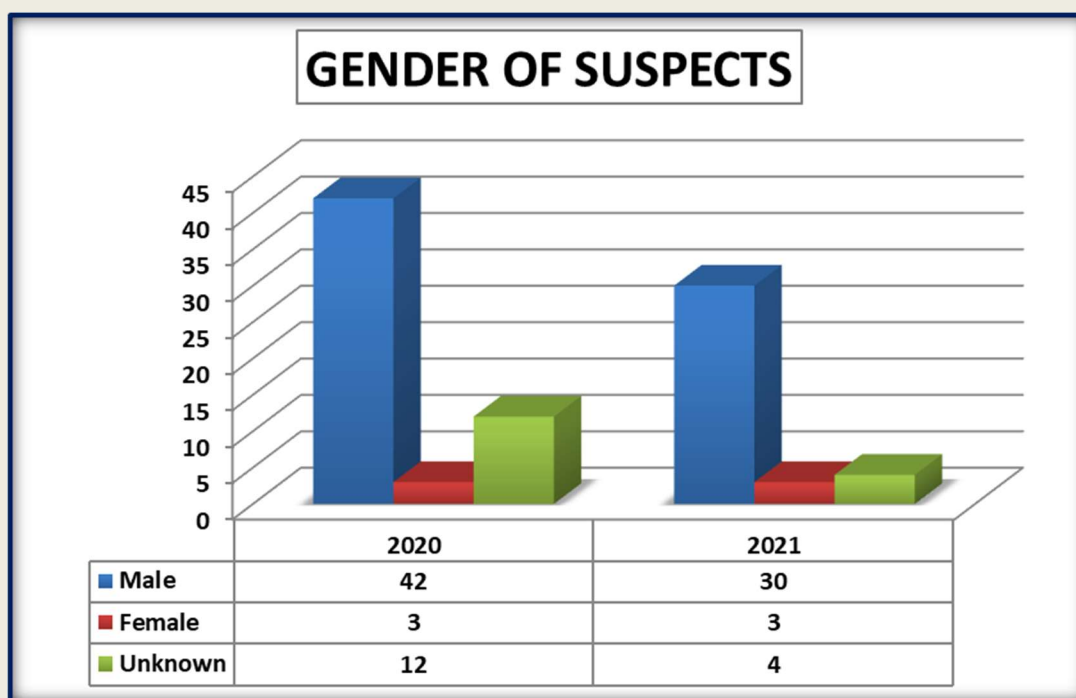


In 2021, the number of suspects ages 15 to 29 decreased 26% compared to 2020. Suspects in the other age groups over the two-year period generally remained consistent. Over the past five years, suspects ages 15 to 29 accounted for 69% of the known individuals involved in police pursuits.

The charts on the following page summarize the *gender* and *race/ethnicity* of the *suspects* involved in pursuits within the past two years.

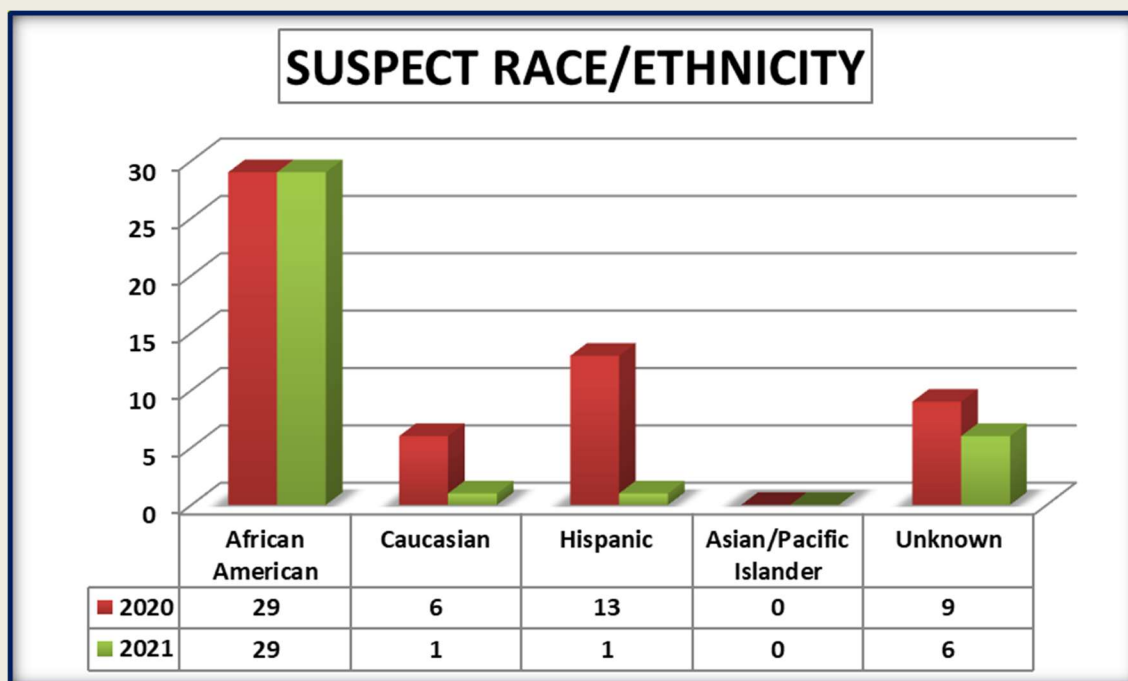


### Suspect Gender



*Male suspects* accounted for the majority of individuals involved in pursuits (81%) in 2021, compared to 74% of pursuits in 2020. From 2020 – 2021, *males* accounted for 78% of the suspects involved in pursuits.

### Suspect Race/Ethnicity



In 2021, 78% of the suspects involved in police pursuits were *African American*, compared to 51% in 2020. *Caucasian* suspects accounted for 3% of the individuals involved in pursuits in 2021, which is consistent

with the number reported in 2020. *Hispanic* suspects accounted for only 3% of the suspects involved in pursuits in 2021 compared to 23% in 2020. For the two-year period from 2020 – 2021, the data shows the following:

- *African American* suspects were involved in 62% of police pursuits.
- *Caucasian* suspects were involved in 7% of police pursuits.
- *Hispanic* suspects were involved in 15% of pursuits.

**Note:** In 16% of police pursuits, the suspect's race/ethnicity was unknown.

## NOTABLE ANALYSIS

### Additional Resources

Police pursuits can be dangerous. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis nationally on utilizing tactical maneuvers to end police pursuits. In 78% of the pursuits in 2021, there were no special tactics or additional resources used, compared to 82% in 2020.

Four of the pursuits reported in 2021 (11%) involved the use of other resources, including other agencies, K9 teams or aircraft, and in four incidents (11%), the police department deployed stop sticks to end the pursuit. MCPD policy prohibits the use of rolling roadblocks and tactical vehicle intervention, but does allow tire deflating devices (*e.g. stop sticks*) to be used by officers trained in the use of such devices. Suspects were still able to evade the police in two of these instances, while the suspects in the other two instances were apprehended. Three collisions occurred during a pursuit in which stop sticks were deployed, which resulted in damage to both the suspect and department vehicles, but no injuries were reported.

Supervisors terminated thirteen of the 37 pursuits (35%) in accordance with *Function Code 135*, primarily when the subject(s) left the county, exited onto an interstate highway, or fled at a high rate of speed which increased the risk associated with the pursuit, and the dangers to the officers and the public outweighed continuation of the pursuit. This number decreased by 10% from the eighteen (39%) pursuits that were terminated for similar reasons in 2020.

### Use of Force in Response to Resistance

Overall, there were 7 pursuits in 2021 (19%) in which force was used by police officers in response to resistance by suspects, compared to 15% of pursuits in 2020.

Eleven (11) of the 37 pursuits (30%) in Montgomery County in 2021 resulted in a "*bailout*", which occurs when the suspect(s) stop or crash the vehicle and flee on foot, compared to 26% of the pursuits reported in 2020. Suspects were subsequently apprehended in approximately 90% of these instances. Seven incidents involving bailouts (64%) also involved collisions, compared to 9 incidents in 2020. These collisions involved damage to suspect vehicles, civilian vehicles and department vehicles, which also caused injuries to suspects, civilians, and police officers, as well as related property damage.

### Collisions

Of the 37 pursuits that occurred in 2021, 13 (35%) resulted in a collision, compared to 22 collisions (48%) reported in 2020. A detailed breakdown by district of the 13 collisions related to pursuits in 2021 is provided in the table on the next page.

PURSUITS INVOLVING COLLISIONS SUMMARY							
DISTRICT	COLLISIONS	DAMAGED SUSPECT VEHICLES	SUSPECTS INJURED	DAMAGED CIVILIAN VEHICLES	CIVILIANS INJURED	DAMAGED MCPD VEHICLES	POLICE OFFICERS INJURED
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	3	3	4	6	1	1	1
3	2	2	0	0	0	1	0
4	2	1	1	4	0	1	0
5	4	4	2	1	0	0	0
6	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	13	12	8	11	1	3	1

Of the 13 pursuits that ended in a collision in 2021, the suspect's vehicle was involved in 92%, compared to 96% of the collisions reported in 2020. Eight people (suspects/passengers) were injured in collisions in 2021, compared to one person in 2020. Eleven privately-owned civilian vehicles were damaged, and one civilian was injured in 2021, compared to four civilian injuries reported in 2020. Three police vehicles sustained damage and there was one police officer injured during the pursuits in 2021, compared to nine police vehicles damaged and one injured officer in 2020.

## SUMMARY

With more than one million people living in Montgomery County and thousands more travelling through the county each year, pursuits rarely occur. There were more than 39,000 traffic stops made in 2020, yet only 46 pursuits resulted from these encounters, an occurrence rate of 0.1%. Similarly, in 2021, there were only 36,449 traffic stops but 37 pursuits still occurred, also a rate of 0.1%. The significant decrease in traffic stops is likely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the closure of schools and business, increasing home and virtual work, thereby reducing the need for travel and volume of cars on the road. Surprisingly, instances of individuals suspected of driving under the influence (DUI) and felony offenses, such as stolen vehicles, remained consistent with the previous year.

The Montgomery County Department of Police continues to be proactive in the area of driver safety, in an effort to reduce the number of law enforcement officer deaths, disabilities, and injuries caused by traffic-related incidents. In 2020, The Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA) introduced a three-hour driving in-service class focused on vehicle maneuverability, parallel parking, and a review of proper vehicle operations during pursuit driving. The class was continued into 2021, and a biennial version will begin in 2022. The department has also taken measures to focus on more in-depth data collection and analysis to identify root causes of collisions so targeted intervention and preventive measures can be instituted to reduce the potential for collisions and injuries in general.

The Montgomery County Department of Police remains dedicated to creating a culture of safety and accountability. As such, a copy of this report will be distributed to all Patrol Services Bureau Commanders and the Director of the Training and Education Division for review and identification of any additional training or policy review which may be necessary on an operational level.



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE**

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